UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/C.2/1993/NGO/1
10 March 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS
22 March-2 April 1993
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Statement submitted by the World Federation of United Nations Associations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 29 and 30 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

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The World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) is an international non-governmental organization promoting public understanding of the United Nations and mobilizing public support for its activities. We are working towards bringing the people closer to the United Nations and the United Nations closer to the people. From among our 78 member associations two thirds come from developing countries.

It is our considered view that the United Nations should be open to non-governmental organizations as broadly as possible. We highly value the contribution that non-governmental organizations in consultative status make to the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, and we value as well the contributions made by non-governmental organizations not in consultative status, under special arrangements, to various United Nations organs and bodies and to past world conferences.

WFUNA is in agreement with decision 1993/214 of the Economic and Social Council that a review take place of the overall arrangements for consultation

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* E/C.2/1993/1.

with non-governmental organizations. Since Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968 will be re-examined and updated, if necessary, in the light of recent experience, the fundamental purpose of such a re-examination must be to expand the participation of the non-governmental sector in the work of the United Nations and of the Economic and Social Council. In other words, the process must have as its fundamental objective the expansion of rights rather than their limitation.

We are very disappointed to note that this unfortunately has not been the case with regard to the rules for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the Commission on Sustainable Development. These rules have eliminated the right to have written statements circulated as official United Nations documents. They have also limited the right to address the Commission by requiring non-governmental organizations to address the Commission through spokespersons. Thus, the rules of procedure adopted by the Economic and Social Council curtail participatory rights already acquired by non-governmental organizations in consultative status, categories I and II, as well as those on the Roster. It is our view that not only have the rights of consultative non-governmental organizations been diminished but those non-governmental organizations who were given the opportunity to apply for Roster status because of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development process are, in fact, not being given any real participatory rights.

We wish to emphasize that, most unfortunately, the debate over the role of non-governmental organizations in the Commission on Sustainable Development concentrated on accreditation procedures rather than the more important participatory rights. We also wish to bring to the attention of the Committee that despite all the verbal support given to "non-governmental organizations from the South", they, in fact, are the most victimized by these new rules. It would be more difficult for them than from "non-governmental organizations from the North" to bear the cost of printing their written statements and of physically delivering them to the United Nations.

WFUNA is more than willing to play its full part in the re-examination of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV), wishes to be fully involved in that process and intends to present specific suggestions at the appropriate time. We would do this in the spirit of ensuring that the United Nations becomes increasingly responsive to the views and concerns of peoples' organizations, whether they be international or national in scope, whether they be representative of northern concerns, southern concerns or both, whether they be broadly based in concern or narrowly focused in interest.

Finally we wish to urge again that such a re-examination must re-confirm the already acquired rights of non-governmental organizations recognized officially by the Economic and Social Council.